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## **Extension of the known range of the Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* in southwest Madagascar**

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Madagascar has been isolated from the African landmass for some 165 million years and, as a result, most of its plants and animals have evolved in isolation. Over 50% of Madagascar's breeding birds are endemic. Although our knowledge of the status and distribution of these species has improved in recent years, much basic information remains unknown. In particular, the species inhabiting the subarid thorn scrub of the far southwest of Madagascar have been little studied.

The Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* was first described in 1997 (Goodman *et al.* 1997). This description was based on two females, collected from two locations near La Table, 13-20 km southeast of Toliara, in 1948 (Fig. 1). More recently, in 1991, a probable male was photographed at a nest 17 km southeast of Toliara, and in 1998 an expedition further south located birds at Vohombe, Lavavolo and Antsihanaka (ZICOMA 1999). These latter records represented the southern limit of the known range of the species. Following consultation with Frank Hawkins (BirdLife International) and experts from Projet ZICOMA (Zones d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux à Madagascar), it was decided to undertake a joint expedition to southwest Madagascar in 2000, to determine if the species was present in previously unsurveyed areas.

## Methods

Surveys were carried out close to the villages of Lintsa (22-24 October) and Itampolo (30 October), between 0530 h and 1030 h, and 1530 h and 1800 h. These times were chosen to reflect the main periods of bird activity. The survey method was to walk slowly along paths through the scrub, recording all species seen or heard, but paying particular attention to records of Red-shouldered Vangas. We played a tape of Red-shouldered Vanga song at regular intervals, in an attempt to elicit responses from any birds present.

## Results and Discussion

We located a minimum of nine singing male Red-shouldered Vangas within a 2 km radius of the village of Lintsa (25°00'S 44°24'E), and one singing male was found c. 3 km E of Itampolo (24°41'S 43°58'E). Photographs and sound recordings were taken at both sites. Our record of a singing male Red-shouldered Vanga close to Itampolo is within the known range of the species, as determined by ZICOMA (1999). However, we also found a population close to Lintsa, c. 50 km southeast of the southern limit of the previously known range of the species, extending its known range.

Male and female Red-shouldered Vangas are similar to the respective sexes of the Red-tailed Vanga *Calicalicus madagascariensis*, which inhabits the same region, but there are several distinctive differences (see Hawkins *et al.* 1997 for details). S. Zefania was familiar with both species, after a previous visit to the region in 1998, and we are confident that our observations were accurate.

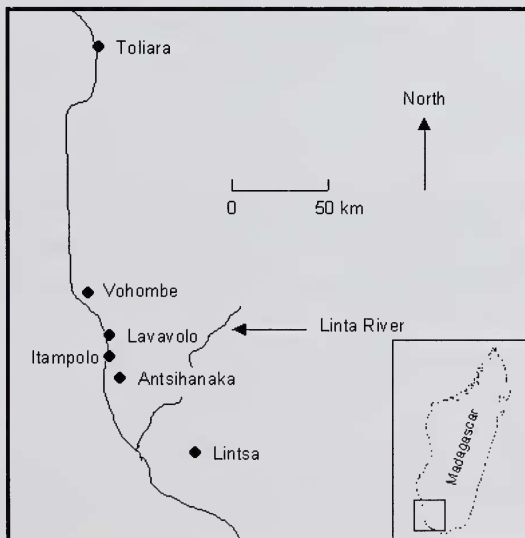


Figure 1. Location of sightings of Red-Shouldered Vangas in southwest Madagascar.

All sightings were in areas of semi-degraded subarid thorn scrub. The region is relatively densely populated, with many small villages scattered throughout the forest. Some parts of the forest have been cleared for timber, charcoal and agriculture, and low densities of livestock (mainly zebu and goats) are grazed throughout. The area suffers from annual droughts and is under increasing human pressure.

Hawkins *et al.* (1997) speculated that the range of the Red-shouldered Vanga might extend up to 250 km south from Toliara, since there was an abundance of suitable habitat close to the coast. Our observations have confirmed that the species is present in good numbers at least as far south as Lintsa and, given that similar habitat exists to the south and east, it seems likely that the range of the Red-shouldered Vanga extends beyond our survey area. More survey work is needed to determine more precisely the range of this, and other, threatened species, in this remote region of Madagascar.

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## **The first nest and egg records of Black-eared Ground Thrush *Zoothera cameronensis*, Budongo Forest, western Uganda.**

*by* **Jeremy A. Lindsay**

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The Black-eared Ground Thrush *Zoothera cameronensis* is a poorly known forest understorey species of equatorial Africa. Its obscurity is reflected in the confusion that has existed over the identity of certain specimens collected in western Uganda and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire) during the early to